

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY NEA/P:RONEILL:DP
APPROVED BY NEA/P:GFSHERMAN
S/PRS - MR. FUNSETH (INFO)
H - MR. FLATEN
SSM - MR. MCANDREW
NEA - MS. GRIFFIN
NEA/ARN - MR. DRAPER
NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM

----- 051642 /67

O 172356Z DEC 76
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
USINT BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DOHA IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAMA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY RABAT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SANA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TUNIS IMMEDIATE
USMISSION SINAI IMMEDIATE
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AMCONSUL DHAHRAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM IMMEDIATE
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
CINCEUR

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GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL, CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - DECEMBER 17

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE, FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS
FROM DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESS BRIEFING FOR DECEMBER 17,
1976:

Q. DO YOU WANT TO GO THROUGH YOUR DRILL ON OPEC THERE THAT
YOU HAVE SO WE CAN --

A. THE WHITE HOUSE ISSUED A STATEMENT TODAY WHICH RE-
FLECTED THE ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION OF REGRET OVER THE
OIL PRICE RISE. I WILL TRY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU
MIGHT HAVE.

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Q. YAMANI APPARENTLY INDICATED THAT HE CONSIDERS THE
SAUDI ACTION AS KIND OF A LEVER OR A TRADE OR SOMETHING ON
WHICH HE WOULD EXPECT SOME CONSIDERATION IN MIDDLE EAST
NEGOTIATIONS AND WITH THE CIEC SITUATION. DO YOU HAVE ANY
REACTION TO THAT KIND OF LINKAGE?

A. FIRST, I DO NOT KNOW THAT HE ESTABLISHED ANY DIRECT
LINKAGE. IN ANY CASE, EACH PROBLEM STANDS ON ITS OWN.
THERE IS NOT ANY LINKAGE.

FIRST THOUGH, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT THE DECISION BY
SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES TO LIMIT THE
INCREASE IN THE PRICE OF THEIR OIL TO FIVE PERCENT REFLECTS
WE THINK, A STATESMANLIKE RECOGNITION BY THEM OF THE CRITI-
CAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF OIL PRICES AND THE
WORLD ECONOMY. BUT EVEN THIS INCREASE IS MORE THAN WE
BELIEVE WAS WARRANTED. AT THE SAME TIME, THESE TWO
COUNTRIES HAVE SHOWN A LAUDABLE WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT
THEIR SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR WORLD GROWTH AND STA-
BILITY.

AS FAR AS THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO SEEKING PEACE IN THE

MIDDLE EAST, AS WELL AS OUR ATTEMPT PRIMARILY THROUGH CIEC TO WORK OUT PROBLEMS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, WE REMAIN COMMITTED ON BOTH-- AS I THINK WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY. AND I THINK BOTH OF THESE INITIATIVES HAVE GENERALLY ENJOYED BROAD BIPARTISAN SUPPORT.

WE HAVE WELCOMED AND WE APPRECIATE SUPPORT SAUDI ARABIA HAS GIVEN AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST PROCESS AND WE HOPE IT WILL CONTINUE. BUT I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO HELPING ANY ANY WAY WE CAN TO ACHIEVE PROGRESS TOWARDS A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE AS WELL AS WE WOULD HOPE THAT PROGRESS WOULD BE MADE IN THE NORTH/SOUTH DIALOGUE.

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I MIGHT ADD AS FOR THE MIDDLE EAST QUESTION, WE HAVE BEEN PLEASED THAT VARIOUS PARTIES TO THE DISPUTE -- BOTH ARAB AND ISRAELI LEADERS -- HAVE BEEN EXPRESSING THE VIEW THAT THE TIME IS PROPITIOUS FOR PROGRESS.

I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO COMMENT ON ANY SPECIFIC PROPOSALS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE OR ABLE TO DISCUSS WHAT WE MIGHT DO BUT TO RECONFIRM THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT REMAINS COMMITTED TO DOING WHAT IT CAN TO PROMOTE A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

Q. IF I COULD FOLLOW THAT UP, I BELIEVE IT WAS PROFESSOR ADELMANN OF MIT THAT MADE THE SUGGESTION SOMETIME BACK THAT ONE WAY THAT MIGHT HAVE AN EFFECT IS IF THE UNITED STATES WERE TO REQUIRE ALL OF THE OPEC COUNTRIES TO

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SUBMIT SEALED BIDS AND, THEREFORE, GIVE IT TO THE LOWEST BIDDER.

Q.

HAS THE SECRETARY HAD ANY NEW THOUGHTS ON THAT, OR WHAT IS HIS REACTION TO THAT?

A. I DO NOT KNOW WHAT THE REACTION HAS BEEN.

Q. YOU'VE NEVER HEARD HIM TALK ABOUT IT OR EVEN THINK ABOUT IT? I MEAN, THIS IS A FAIRLY --

A. I HAVE NOT DISCUSSED THAT PARTICULAR PROPOSAL WITH THE SECRETARY.

Q. WILL THE UNITED STATES NOW CONTINUE -- WILL IT PAY ONLY THE PRICE THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE SET -- THE SAUDIS AND THE EMIRATES?

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A. WELL THE PROBLEM --

Q. WILL THEY BUY VENEZUELAN OIL, FOR INSTANCE, AT THE NEW PRICE?

A. THE PROBLEM -- I DON'T THINK ANYONE HAS REALLY BEEN ABLE TO ANALYZE THE ECONOMIC IMPACT IN THIS BECAUSE OIL COMES FROM VARIOUS SOURCES.

FOR EXAMPLE, I UNDERSTAND WE GET ABOUT A MILLION AND A HALF BARRELS PER DAY FROM SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, WHICH REPRESENTS --

Q. ONE AND A HALF MILLION, OR BILLION, SIR?

A. ONE AND A HALF MILLION -- WHICH REPRESENTS ABOUT 30 PERCENT OF OUR IMPORTS FROM OPEC STATES AND ONLY 23 PERCENT OF OUR TOTAL IMPORTS.

I THINK I HAD BETTER GO ON BACKGROUND. MY UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN IS THAT AS THIS SORTS OUT, THERE WILL BE A BLEND, BECAUSE SOURCES COME FROM BOTH SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, AS WELL AS THE OTHER OIL PRODUCING COUNTRIES -- SO THAT THERE COULD BE AN INCREASE BETWEEN 5 AND 10 PERCENT.

Q. WELL MY QUESTION REALLY IS: WILL THERE BE A MAJOR SWITCH IN AMERICAN PURCHASE FROM THE ELEVEN? VENEZUELA IS ONE OF THE MAJOR ONES WE BUY OIL FROM. WILL WE BUY MUCH LESS NOW, OF VENEZUELAN OIL AND TURN MORE, AND MORE,

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TO THE SAUDIS AND THE EMIRATES?

A. AGAIN ON BACKGROUND: I WOULD EXPECT THE OIL COMPANIES WILL CLEARLY, WANT TO BUY AS MUCH OF THE LESS EXPENSIVE,
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SAUDI AND UAE OIL AS POSSIBLE. AND I HAVE ALSO NOTED THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE SAID THAT THEY HAVE UNUSED CAPACITY AND THAT THEY ARE PREPARED TO INCREASE PRODUCTION.

BUT AGAIN, WE WILL HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE HOW THAT ACTUALLY WORKS OUT IN THE MARKETPLACE.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY FIGURES ABOUT THE INCREASED COST, THEN,

OF REFINING SAUDI OIL -- THAT SORT OF THING WE WILL BE FACED WITH SINCE THEY DON'T REFINES IT THEMSELVES, BY AND LARGE?

DO WE HAVE REFINERY CAPACITY HERE TO ACCEPT IT, FOR INSTANCE?

A. AGAIN ON BACKGROUND: I DON'T THINK THAT IS A PROBLEM. BUT THERE WILL BE A BLEND OF THE PRICE BECAUSE WE WILL BE USING BOTH THE MORE EXPENSIVE AS WELL AS THE LESS EXPENSIVE OIL.

OUR CONSUMPTION IS ABOUT SEVENTEEN MILLION BARRELS A DAY, IN THINK, AND WE HAVE BEEN IMPORTING ABOUT SEVEN MILLION BARRELS. SO WE ARE IMPORTING ABOUT 40 PERCENT OF OUR CONSUMPTION -- AND AS I INDICATED, A MILLION AND A HALF OF THAT COMES FROM SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AND THE REMAINDER OF THE IMPORTS FROM THE REST OF OPEC. SO YOU SEE, THERE IS A MIX IN OUR OWN IMPORTS.

Q. DO YOU HAVE THE FIGURES ON IMPORTS FROM VENEZUELA, DAILY, THERE?

A. NO, I DO NOT HAVE IT.

Q. BOB, IS THERE CONCERN AT ALL, IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT, THAT THIS SPLIT AMONG THE OPEC NATIONS MAY SPILL OVER AND DISRUPT SOME OF THE PROGRESS THAT HAS BEEN MADE TOWARD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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UNITY IN THE APPROACH TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT?
THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT?

A. ON BACKGROUND, I THINK IT MAY BE PREMATURE TO TALK ABOUT A "SPLIT" IN OPEC. THEY CERTAINLY HAVE HAD A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION ON PRICE -- BUT OUR IMMEDIATE REACTION REALLY, IS THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE ACTION. AND I MUST SAY THAT EVEN WITH THE LOW PRICE THE OVERALL

ECONOMIC EFFECT IS SERIOUS -- EVEN AT 5 PERCENT. BUT AGAIN, OBVIOUSLY, IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE BUT IT STILL REMAINS SERIOUS.

Q. YOU ARE SAYING THAT YOU ARE NOT DIRECTLY CONCERNED RIGHT NOW ABOUT POSSIBLE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS?

A. NO, I HADN'T ADDRESSED THAT.

Q. THERE IS NO FEELING HERE, THEN, THAT THIS SITUATION COULD BE THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR OPEC?

A. I AM JUST NOT ABLE TO SPECULATE ON THAT.

Q. WHEN YOU FIRST WENT ON BACKGROUND, YOU GAVE A FIGURE OF 5 TO 10 PERCENT INCREASE IN PURCHASES FROM SAUDI ARABIA AND UAE --

A. NO. WHAT I WAS SAYING ON BACKGROUND -- FIRST THE QUESTION WAS: HOW MUCH WILL THE INCREASE BE IN OUR OWN COST?

AND IT IS A COMPLICATED PROBLEM BECAUSE YOU HAVE SOME OIL THAT WILL BE PRESUMABLY PURCHASED AT A 5 PERCENT INCREASE -- AND WE ARE CONSUMING BOTH. SO THERE WILL BE SOME SORT OF BLEND, AND I AM SURE THE OIL COMPANIES, THEMSELVES, HAVE NOT SORTED IT OUT.

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Q. YOU DON'T HAVE AN ESTIMATE AT ALL -- EVEN A BALLPARK FIGURE OF WHAT THE BLEND WILL AMOUNT TO?

A. NO. END BACKGROUND

Q. I AM A LITTLE PUZZLED ABOUT ONE THING: A COUPLE OF DAYS AGO, WHEN SHEIK YAMANI SAID, PUBLICLY, THAT SAUDI ARABIA OPPOSES ANY PRICE INCREASE -- THE STATE DEPARTMENT WELCOMED THAT, AND SAID IT WAS A "STATESMANLIKE" ATTITUDE THAT IT REFLECTED.

A. YES.

Q. SAUDI ARABIA IS NOW IMPOSING A 5 PERCENT INCREASE. AND THAT, TOO, IS "STATESMANLIKE."? AND SO I AM A LITTLE PUZZLED. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I FIND YOUR ANSWERS ON SAUDI ARABIA AMBIVOLENT. YOU ARE PRAISING THEM, AND YOU ARE IMPLYING CRITICISM. WHAT ARE YOU REALLY SAYING? AR YOU DISAPPOINTED THAT THE PRICE WENT UP AT ALL?

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A. YES, THAT CLEARLY COMES OUT IN THE WHITE HOUSE STATEMENT.

Q. RIGHT.

A. -- THAT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THERE WAS ANY ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION FOR ANY PRICE INCREASE. AND WE CLEARLY WOULD HAVE PREFERRED IF THEY HAD NOT CHOSEN TO RAISE PRICES BY ANY AMOUNT.

Q. SO THAT IF THEY RAISED IT BY JUST 5 -- THAT STILL REFLECTS A STATESMANLIKE RECOGNITION?

A. I THINK IN THE CONTEXT OF THE OPEC CONFERENCE AND
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WHAT WAS PROPOSED, YES.

BUT I COUPLED THIS --

Q. THAT IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE.

A. EXCUSE ME?

Q. THAT IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE.

Q. THAT IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE?

A. EXCUSE ME.

Q. THAT IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE IS WHAT YOU ARE SAYING?

A. YES, AND THE FACT THAT SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UNITED
ARAB EMIRATES WERE ALONE IN RESISTING AN INCREASE AND
THAT THEY HAVE DECIDED TO RAISE 5 PERCENT. BUT AGAIN I
COUPLED MY STATEMENT ABOUT SAUDI ARABIA BY SAYING THAT WE
BELIEVE THAT ANY INCREASE WAS UNWARRANTED.

Q. WOULD YOU SAY THEN, BOB, WHAT YOU ARE ACTUALLY SAYING
IS THAT IT'S LESS STATESMANLIKE TO SUGGEST 5 PERCENT THAN
NO PERCENT. IN OTHER WORDS, YOU FEEL THAT SAUDI ARABIA
IS JUST A LITTLE LESS STATESMANLIKE THAN IT WAS THE
OTHER DAY?

A. THAT IS NOT WHAT I SAID, NO.

Q. I KNOW IT ISN'T. I AM ASKING YOU IS THIS WHAT YOU
MEAN.

A. I MEAN WHAT I SAID.

Q. I DON'T UNDERSTAND. I THINK HE HAS RAISED A VERY GOOD
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QUESTION. HOW CAN THEY BE STATESMANLIKE IF THEY ASK FOR
NO INCREASE AND STATESMANLIKE IF THEY ASK FOR 5 PERCENT,
WHICH YOU SAY IS UNREASONABLE?

A. I DO NOT THINK IT IS UNREASONABLE. I THINK YOU HAVE
TO INTERPRET THE SAUDI ACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DE-
LIBERATIONS THAT WERE TAKING PLACE.

Q. DID THE SAUDIS GIVE US ANY INDICATION WHY TWO DAYS AGO THEY WERE WILLING TO HOLD IT TO NOTHING AND YET FIND IT NECESSARY TO MOVE TO 5 PERCENT? IF THEY ARE GOING TO CUT THE OPEC CARTEL ARRANGEMENT, WHY NOT JUST STAY AT ZERO? WHY DO YOU THINK THEY HAD TO GO TO 5 PERCENT?

A. I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T HAVE THAT.

Q. WELL, YOU SAID THAT IN THE CONTEXT IT WAS A REASONABLE THING FOR THEM TO DO. WHAT LED YOU TO THAT CONCLUSION?

A. WELL, OUR KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT WAS GOING ON IN OPEC IS BASED ON THE PRESS REPORTS WHICH WE HAVE BEEN RECEIVING ABOUT PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT THE DEBATE.

Q. ON THAT SAME POINT, DO WE ACCEPT AS FACT WHAT YAMANI IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID TODAY, THAT THE 5 PERCENT HAS ALREADY BEEN IN EFFECT FOR SOME WEEKS OR MONTHS AS A RESULT OF THE MARKET MOVEMENTS?

A. ON BACKGROUND I DON'T PRESUME TO BE AN EXPERT ON OIL, BUT IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE REASON THAT PURCHASERS WERE PAYING MORE THAN THE LANDED PRICE OR MORE THAN 5 PERCENT WAS IN ANTICIPATION OF AN INCREASE. SO, I THINK THIS IS THE EXPLANATION OF THE 5 PERCENT PREMIUM WHICH PEOPLE HAVE BEEN PREPARED TO PAY FOR SAUDI OIL.

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Q. IN OTHER WORDS, HEDGING AGAINST A LARGER INCREASE?

A. RIGHT. THAT IS MY UNDERSTANDING. END BACKGROUND.

Q. IS THIS ADMINISTRATION AWARE OF THE CONTENT OF THE DISCUSSIONS THAT TOOK PLACE BETWEEN MR. VANCE AND THE SAUDI ARABIAN AMBASSADOR?

A. I BELIEVE MR. VANCE DISCUSSED THAT WITH THE SECRETARY, YES.

Q. SO, IT WAS A COORDINATED DISCUSSION?

A. I WOULD NOT DESCRIBE IT AS COORDINATED, NO, BUT I KNOW THAT THE SUBJECT OF OPEC AND I BELIEVE MR. VANCE'S MEETING WITH THE SAUDI ARABIAN AMBASSADOR, THAT MR. VANCE DISCUSSED THIS WITH THE SECRETARY. BUT, I WOULD NOT DESCRIBE IT AS COORDINATED.

Q. BEFORE OR AFTER OR BOTH? WERE THE DISCUSSIONS BE-

TWEEN VANCE AND KISSINGER BEFORE VANCE SAW THE SAUDIS OR AFTER OR BOTH?

A. WELL, THE GENERAL SUBJECT OF A POSSIBLE OPEC OIL PRICE RISE I UNDERSTAND DID COME UP IN TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THE SECRETARY AND MR. VANCE. YOU SEE, THEY HAD ONE --

Q. WITH RESPECT, THAT DOESN'T ANSWER THE QUESTION I ASKED. WAS IT BEFORE OR AFTER OR BOTH?

A. BEFORE OR AFTER WHAT?

Q. WERE THE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN VANCE AND KISSINGER ON THIS SUBJECT BEFORE OR AFTER THE TIME, WHICH I BELIEVE WAS LAST TUESDAY, WHEN VANCE SAW THE SAUDI ARABIAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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AMBASSADOR? DID HE REPORT BACK TO KISSINGER AFTER?

A. I AM NOT CHARACTERIZING IT AS ANY QUESTION OF COORDINATION OR REPORTING BACK. BUT I AM CONFIRMING THAT THE GENERAL SUBJECT OF A POSSIBLE OIL PRICE RISE WAS DISCUSSED BY THE SECRETARY AND MR. VANCE ON THE TELEPHONE BEFORE HE MET WITH THE SAUDI ARABIA AMBASSADOR. BUT, I DO NOT KNOW THAT THERE WAS ANY DIRECT EXCHANGE REGARDING THAT MEETING -- OR HOW DETAILED IT WAS.

Q. THERE WERE NO DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SAUDI ARABIA CONCERNING WHAT SAUDI ARABIA WOULD OR MIGHT DO AT THE OPEC MEETING BEFORE THIS WAS ALL ANNOUNCED? YOUR INFORMATION COMES JUST FROM THE PRESS?

A. MY STATEMENT, REFERRED TO THE DELIBERATIONS THAT WERE GOING ON AT THE OPEC CONFERENCE. WE, AS YOU KNOW, HAVE HAD RATHER EXTENSIVE CONVERSATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS WITH BOTH OIL CONSUMERS AND OIL PRODUCERS INCLUDING SAUDI ARABIA. AND WHILE WE DID NOT HAVE ANY ADVANCE WORD ON WHAT SHEIKH YAMANI WAS GOING TO SAY WHEN HE ARRIVED WHEN HE SAID THAT SAUDI ARABIA WOULD OPPOSE ANY OIL PRICE

INCREASE, WE DID HAVE A GENERAL IDEA OF WHAT THE SAUDI POSITION WOULD BE BEFORE THE CONFERENCE BEGAN AS A RESULT OF OUR CONVERSATIONS.

Q. WAS IT INDICATED THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE TO SETTLE FOR A 5 PERCENT?

A. I JUST DO NOT HAVE THAT KIND OF DETAILED INFORMATION.

KISSINGER

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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BEIRUT
CAIRO

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JIDDA
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